DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 762 CS 004 903

AUTHOR Rank, Janice
TITLE One That Works! An Integrated Program of Basic Skills.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western College Reading Association (12th, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 7-10, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Basic Skills; Community Colleges; Course Content; *English Instruction; *Integrated Curriculum; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Junior College Students; *Mathematics Instruction; Nontraditional Students; *Remedial Programs; *Speech Communication; Study Skills

ABSTRACT

A program of basic skills instruction combining English, mathematics, and oral communications was initiated in a community college to promote mastery of these skills in students functioning at a level equivalent to less than grade six on an English placement test. A group of 38 students were enrolled in three separate classes in English, oral communications, and mathematics for a total of 20 hours per week for 18 weeks. The classes were actively integrated so that a maximum of transfer occurred both between the classes and between school and daily life activities. This integration was achieved through the application of skills learned in one class to material being taught in the other classes. Preliminary results indicated that an integrated basic skills course was superior to separate, nonintegrated courses in teaching basic skills to low achievers. Of the 32 students completing the first semester, 30 received passing grades and 26 were still enrolled in classes at midterm of the following semester. (Author/DF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED173762

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Janice Rank

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Janice Rank

ONE THAT WORKS! AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM OF BASIC SKILLS

Basic Skills in the community college has become a present-day reality as the need to teach fundamental academic skills, rather than content, to students functioning at lower levels has been recognized. The vague nature of the term "basic skills" has led each college to determine its own institutional definition for the term and its own accompanying guidelines. These definitions and guidelines are quite specific to the institution and the population it serves.

Porterville College is a small, rural college in the southeast corner of the San Joaquin Valley in California, serving a town of 17,000 and a greater trade area of 57,000, approximately 33 percent of whom are Hispanic. The college itself has enrolled close to 2,200 students for the 1978-79 school year.

Over the past few years, the declining skills of entering students have been recognized and appropriate remedial courses implemented. Porterville College now has three levels of remedial course work including the new basic skills courses. Students are placed into the proper level according to high school grades and scores on standardized tests of reading and writing. These tests are required of all new full-time students. Only the lowest

CS004903

level of instruction, Basic Skills 72, implements integrated instruction by actively coordinating the three separate basic skills courses.

Basic Skills 72, adhering to the open-door policy, serves students who have been out of school for some time, or who quit school at an early age, or who have language difficulties, learning disabilities, or a combination of these and/or other problems. In observing these students, several common characteristics have been noted. (1) Most students are lacking in self-confidence. (2) They tend to exhibit poor organizational abilities. (3) They are very dependent academically. (4) Students low in one area are generally low in other areas as well.

As a result of these observations, the Basic Skills Committee at Porterville College has defined basic skills as concerning four areas of academic development--written communication, oral communication, basic computations, and organizational skills--plus a conscious effort toward raising self-esteem through success-oriented activities. Three separate courses from different academic divisions were designed to serve these areas. It was decided that these courses should be linked together to form a complete academic program for these students and that careful integration be maintained. It was also emphasized that although individualization is desirable, these students are generally not independent learners and maximum teacher direction in a traditional classroom would better serve their needs.

Program description

Students placed in Basic Skills 72 must enroll in three separate classes--English 72, Oral Communications 72, and Math 72. Students are in class nine hours per week for English, plus five hours of individualized lab for a total of fourteen hours; receiving eight credits, four of which apply toward the Associate of Arts Degree. Math and Oral Communication classes both meet three

hours per week for two units of credit each, only one each of which applies toward the A.A. Degree. The totals then are twenty hours per week in class for twelve units of credit, six of which count towards graduation. The classes are conducted during a regular semester of eighteen weeks.

The Basic Skills Lab, meeting for an hour each afternoon, is used for completing assignments from the English, Math and Oral Communication classes. During this lab time, one instructor, two teaching assistants, and one student aide work individually with students on their assignments as needed. Additional lab assignments are selected from various lab materials on an optional basis. Each student keeps a record of his lab activities on a timesheet. The lab is also open another two hours every afternoon for make-up work and extra lab practice.

Course content and integration

Each course adheres to the principles of its separate discipline but every effort is made to integrate the courses.

English 72 includes skill development in word recognition and analysis, phonics and spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, flexibility of reading rate, critical thinking and reading, the principles of basic grammar, sentence and paragraph writing, and study skills. Included in those study skills are the development of organizational skills, outlining and note taking, writing summaries, use of the table of contents and indexes of the encyclopedia and the dictionary, use of the library to obtain resource materials, time management, reading maps, charts, tables and graphs, following directions and taking tests. Receiving special emphasis is the application of these skills and survival techniques.

Exit level skills in English include reading at grade level 6.0 or above as determined by a standardized reading test, and the ability to write simple sentences without error.

The Oral Communications 72 class has course content that includes speaking in complete phrases and linking these phrases together to form ideas, being able to effectively use standard informal English speech, the ability to speak and transmit a rational message in front of a group for up to three minutes or more in length, the utilization of listening skills, and the understanding that words have different connotations to people depending upon their perception of the world.

Oral communication also focuses on overcoming shyness and developing a positive self image, as well as learning to organize ideas and facts. Oral Communications 72 does not have a formal exit level, but is based on a standard grading scale.

The content in Math 72 is limited primarily to the basic computations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, decimals, and fractions. Students are also asked to write out numbers, to organize math problems, to know math terminology and symbols, to know how to read and analyze math problems, and to understand units of measurement. Diagnostic pre-testing and post-testing determines students' needs and progress. Exit levels are dependent upon mastery of the material.

A most important part of any successful program is the people involved. At Porterville College there are exceptional people interested and involved in the Basic Skills 72 Program. These include the administrative personnel--who actively support the program--three well-qualified instructors, two credentialed teaching assistants, two student aides, and most important--dedicated students.

Although these classes are taught separately, they are actively integrated in order to provide maximum application and transfer among courses. This is accomplished by weekly meetings of the instructors involved and additional

meetings with the teaching assistants. In these sessions, specific problems with methods, materials, and individual students are discussed, as well as ways to transfer instruction among the classes. In addition, one of the teaching assistants goes to each class with the students, thereby providing continuous communication between each segment.

Classes are integrated in a number of ways. One obvious method is the teaching of vocabulary and spelling in the English class from Oral Communications and Math. Communication skills discussed in Oral Communications are practiced in the English journal. Organization and outlining including main ideas, sub-ideas, and supporting details are practiced in both Oral Communications and English classes using the same vocabulary and procedures. Students do a complete research project resulting in a term paper for English and a speech for Oral Communications. A unit on career exploration is used to teach reading and writing and is also used as a basis for one of the speeches in Oral Communications. Another way in which writing and organization are incorporated into Oral Communications is by having students critique, in writing, each other's speeches. These critiques are corrected for content in Oral Communication and for mechanics in English.

Integrating math with the other two classes is a little more difficult. One technique used is to have students work in groups of three in the Oral Communications class to explain to each other math concepts introduced in the Math class. In English, Math word problems are read and analyzed. Some of the critical thinking exercises used in the English class involve math.

One of the materials used is a newspaper written in easy English for adults. This newspaper incorporates basic skills in each area centered around current news. Other material used is primarily teacher prepared.

Besides the meetings to integrate skills and the assistant who meets with each class, the instructors frequently visit each other's classes and

attend the afternoon lab to assist students.

Results and conclusions

This program was first implemented the Fall semester of the 1978-79 school year. Of the 38 students who began the course, 32 completed the class with only two failing grades.

A follow-up study of midterm grades the semester following enrollment in the Basic Skills course showed positive results. Of the 32 students completing the course, 26 (81 percent) were still enrolled in courses at Porterville College. Those enrolled in courses in the fields of English, Math, or Oral Communications had grades ranging from B to D with only two F's. This appears to be significantly indicative of success in academic courses.

Preliminary results indicate that an intensive, comprehensive, and integrated course of Basic Skills is superior to separate, non-integrated courses in teaching basic skills to low-level students. This statement is based primarily upon subjective evaluation as an objective research design was not implemented.

The Basic Skills 72 Program was repeated during the Spring semester, 1979. Several changes in curriculum and techniques were made to improve the course and more suggested for the next semester. Positive results on tests and grades, as well as subjective evaluation by students, teaching and administrative personnel, and the community, have led the Basic Skills Committee to recommend its continuance in the future.